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RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0413
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4129
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2403
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0441
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1074
RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR 0100
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7389
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0219
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2451
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TASHKENT 000482

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [AORC](#) [MOPS](#) [KTIA](#) [NATO](#) [AF](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: NATO ENVOY: UZBEKISTAN POSITIVE ON COOPERATION

REF: A. TASHKENT 212

[1](#)B. 07 TASHKENT 1989

Classified By: Poloff Steven Prohaska and DATT Jeff Hartman for reasons
1.4 (b, d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. NATO envoy Robert Simmons gave a readout to NATO Embassies on April 15 of meetings with Government of Uzbekistan (GOU) officials. According to Simmons, senior GOU officials may be split on pushing Uzbekistan's "6 plus 3" proposal. Simmons reported on the NATO land transit agreement and anticipates completion of the agreement by late Fall 2008. He noted that Uzbekistan is very worried about drugs and the Taliban and is highly critical of President Karzai, advising that NATO be prepared for a possible change in Afghan leadership next year. Simmons warned that European Union sanctions could trouble the transit agreement negotiations. End summary.

Uzbekistan Supportive of NATO Efforts in Afghanistan

[1](#)2. (C) NATO's Deputy Assistant Secretary General and Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia Robert Simmons gave a readout to NATO Embassies on April 15 of his recent meetings with Government of Uzbekistan (GOU) officials. Simmons remarked that Karimov gave an especially substantive speech at the NATO/EAPC summit in Bucharest April 2-4, and that most of his discussions with GOU officials centered on Afghanistan. Simmons said that, in light of the Summit and these negotiations, an eventual visit by the NATO Secretary General to Uzbekistan is under consideration.

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[1](#)3. (C) Simmons met with the heads of the Senate and

Legislative Chamber and addressed students at the Academy of Sciences before more formal meetings with GOU officials. According to Simmons, Uzbekistan supports NATO involvement in Afghanistan and wants NATO and the USG to succeed in Afghanistan. Simmons referred to National Security Council (NSC) Secretary Atayev as the overall manager of GOU negotiations on the transit agreement, and Foreign Minister Norov as the operator, with Minister of Defense Mirzayev as the man tasked to negotiate details.

Simmons Speculates on GOU Messages, Motives

¶4. (C) Interestingly, in meetings with the GOU, Simmons reported that only Foreign Minister Norov pushed hard for the "6 plus 3" proposal, while Atayev was more relaxed about it. Simmons believed that Atayev was only interested in further consultations, not a specific forum, in addition to regular military-to-military contact. Simmons reasoned that Atayev may have signaled the GOU's eventual acceptance of "26 plus 5." Simmons speculated that a desire to appease Russia by giving it a seat at the table with NATO may underpin efforts to push the "6 plus 3" proposal, but Simmons was not sure that pulling Russia into these discussions is a good idea. He noted that Russia feels uncomfortable about NATO having a dialogue with the Central Asian states that is unfiltered by Russia. Simmons even described an exchange with Russian Ambassador to NATO Dmitriy Rogozin, who at one point exclaimed, "How dare you talk to our colonies!" Simmons also said that the GOU reported that it received no information on these negotiations from the Russian Embassy in Tashkent. GOU officials expressed their gratitude to Simmons for the information that

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the GOU's mission in Brussels had received from NATO on these transit proposals.

Doubts About "6 Plus 3" Proposal

¶5. (C) Simmons indicated that he had pushed back on "6 plus 3," asserting that NATO does want to consult with Uzbekistan, but "6 plus 3" may not be the best way to do this. While NATO and Uzbekistan share goals, he said, a format that includes Russia and Iran could be problematic, so how to reach these objectives is an open question. (Note: Uzbekistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently clarified that the "6 plus 3" proposal does not envision any role for representatives of the Government of Afghanistan or warring factions in the Contact Group, as this would result in "never ending meetings." The MFA recommends that the Contact Group come to agreement on certain issues, and then inform Afghanistan of these decisions. End note.)

Land Transit Agreement

¶6. (C) Simmons noted that NATO signed a land transit agreement with Russia, on which he had briefed the Central Asian Embassies in Brussels after his discussions with the Russians. Russia wanted the land transit agreement to operate under the auspices of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Simmons said. While Russia had provided only minimal information on its proposal, it expected everyone to sign up. Among the Central Asian states, only Kazakhstan pushed for a land transit agreement under the CSTO, with the other Central Asian leaders explicitly stating that they did not wish this to occur under CSTO, he said. Simmons opined that Uzbekistan is better at balancing its relations between NATO and CSTO than Kazakhstan is.

¶7. (C) Simmons said that the Russians signed a permissive letter for the agreement to avoid running it through the Duma for formal approval. (Comment: Nationalist sentiments could

flare up in the Russian Duma. End comment.) The GOU, on the other hand, intended to complete an exchange of letters to be voted on by the two Houses of Parliament. (Comment: Uzbekistan's Parliament is firmly under President Karimov's control. End comment.)

18. (C) Simmons stated that the model for the NATO rail transit agreement is the German agreement signed by both the Governments of Uzbekistan and Germany in March 2008. Simmons identified three categories for goods shipped per the terms of the land transit agreement: non-military, military but non-lethal, and lethal military equipment. During Simmons' meeting with Uzbekistan's Minister of Defense Mirzayev and NSC Secretary Atayev, the GOU representatives reported that they had approved the transit of non-lethal military equipment through Uzbekistan's territory, Simmons said. Simmons hoped that any goods that were not explicitly prohibited would be permitted, but was not sure this was likely. (Note: This NATO transit agreement is for rail shipment only. NATO does not envision discussions for road transit. This agreement is also expressly for contractor-delivered shipments, not for NATO member government-vehicle delivery. End note.)

19. (C) Simmons explained that NATO aimed to complete an agreement with the GOU by the summer break in August 2008.

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Sounding very optimistic, he said that NATO had promised a working copy of the transit agreement to the GOU within a week. The GOU would then have a month to study and react to the draft before follow-on discussions in late May 2008. Simmons warned that NATO expected negotiations with Kazakhstan to proceed very slowly, but that NATO anticipated completion of the agreements in Fall 2008 followed by operations as early as late Fall 2008.

Uzbekistan's Threat Perceptions, Views on NATO Cooperation

110. (C) Uzbekistan is very worried about drugs and the Taliban in Afghanistan, Simmons noted. Foreign Minister Norov was also critical of President Karzai, suggesting that NATO be prepared for a possible change in leadership after the election in Afghanistan next year. (Comment: Norov's comments track with the skepticism that GOU officials have conveyed during meetings with the Ambassador and Embassy staff over the past six months. End comment.)

111. (C) Simmons sensed strong support for non-military engagement with NATO, particularly from Atayev and the Parliament. Simmons said that the GOU is happy that NATO's Science Committee will pay for a project involving the destruction of melange rocket fuel residue.

112. (C) Simmons also spoke with Minister of Defense Mirzayev about the Planning and Review Process (PARP), but did not indicate what the results of this discussion were. (Note: Uzbekistan's Deputy Defense Minister Niyazov in May 2007 pledged to re-join the PARP at an unspecified date, ref tel B. End note.) Mirzayev invited NATO to visit Uzbekistan's training center for forces interoperable with NATO.

Sanctions Could Adversely Affect Transit Agreement

113. (C) A European Union decision to re-impose sanctions could lead to a negative response from Uzbekistan, Simmons warned. Uzbekistan can live with "statements of concern," he said, but would regard steps like sanctions as "punitive measures." "We might have trouble with the transit agreement if sanctions are adopted," Simmons opined, without additional explanation.

Comment:

¶14. (C) Simmons' comment on Uzbekistan's probable reaction to EU sanctions is speculative, but we will perhaps have a chance to see for ourselves after the EU's April 28 decision.

The overland transit of fuel across Uzbekistan's territory already plays an important role in NATO operations in Afghanistan, and a land transit agreement could bring further benefits in terms of transporting other goods and providing a secondary route besides the current primary one through Pakistan.

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